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Garth Ennis Russ Braun Darick Robertson

The BOYS™

FIFTY-TWO

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The BOYS™

FIFTY-TWO

In a world where costumed heroes soar through the sky and masked vigilantes prowl the night, someone's got to make sure the "supes" don't get out of line. And someone will.

Billy Butcher, Wee Hughie, Mother's Milk, The Frenchman and The Female are The Boys: a CIA-backed team of very dangerous people, each one dedicated to the struggle against the most lethal force on Earth- superpower. Some superheroes have to be watched. Some have to be controlled. And some of them- sometimes- need to be taken out of the picture.

That's when you call in **The Boys**.

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WHAT'S THE MATTER, BOY, DID NO ONE EVER TELL YOU TO SHUT YOUR GODDAMNED MOUTH BEFORE?

SIT.

BARBARY COAST

part one

TO DEAL WITH YOUR BLEATINGS ONE AT A TIME, YES, I SET THE THING UP. WHAT I DIDN'T DO WAS GET YOUR FRIEND DET INVOLVED IN TRAFFICKING NARCOTICS.

OR LEAD BIG BOBBY INTO THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL.

WHY I DID IT WAS TO SEE HOW YOU'D COPE.

WHY I WAS THERE AT ALL WAS BECAUSE MOTHER'S MILK CALLED ME.

UH-- GUH--

AND NO, I'M NOT A SWEET OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.

GREG MALLORY, LATE OF THE THIRD ARMORED.

PLEASED TO MEET YOU.

UM... WELL.

GOOD ACCENT.

I WORKED WITH A LOT OF YOUR INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE AFTER THE WAR. DID THEM BETTER THAN THEY DID ME.

AYE, BRITS ALL THINK YANK ACCENTS ARE EASY, BUT THEY'RE FUCKIN' SHITE AT IT...UH...

YOU WANTED TO SEE HOW I'D COPE? HOW DID I COPE?

HMM.

THE SMUGGLING OPERATION'S DONE WITH. THE RUSSIANS' VESSEL WAS INTERCEPTED BY THE ROYAL NAVY, WHICH MEANS ALL THE PRINCIPALS ARE NOW IN CUSTODY.

ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU BLUNDERED INTO THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL AND GAVE YOURSELF AWAY. YOU DIDN'T HAVE A PLAN. YOU HAD ONE MAN BADLY INJURED--YES, THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TAKE PEOPLE TO WAR, BUT ULTIMATELY YOU LOST YOUR TEMPER AND WENT STRAIGHT AT YOUR OPPONENT.

IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THE BIRD HE COULD HAVE SHOT YOU DEAD.

ALL IN ALL, ABOUT A C MINUS.

AND ANOTHER THING: TUPPER KILLED YOUR FRIEND AND YOU HAD HIM AT YOUR MERCY. WITH THE I.D. YOU CARRY YOU COULD HAVE SNAPPED HIS NECK AND WALKED AWAY SCOT-FREE.

I COULD'VE--?

I...I DON'T...

YOU'VE GOT NO INSTINCT FOR IT.

WORK ON THAT.

I DON'T WANNA GET BETTER AT *KILLIN' FOLK...!*

YOU SHOULD AT LEAST TRY TO GET BETTER AT SOMETHING. HOW LONG WERE YOU SEEING THAT GIRL BEFORE YOU REALIZED WHO SHE WAS?

YOU KNEW?

RECOGNIZED HER RIGHT AWAY. I KEEP UP WITH THIS STUFF, EVEN IF I'M NOT INVOLVED ANYMORE.

M.M. TOLD ME YOU'D HAD A BAD BREAK-UP BEFORE YOU LEFT; ALL I DID WAS PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER.

SOME GOING. LAYING A SUPE AND NOT EVEN KNOWING.

I PLAYED NICE GUY SO YOU'D RELAX AND TALK. I LISTENED TO YOU BITCH ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY IN SCOTLAND, BUT ALL I COULD SEE WAS PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THAT I CAN SEE.

AND NO EXCUSES FOR NOT PULLING YOUR HEAD OUT OF YOUR ASS, WHICH I HAVE TO SAY IS GOING TO TAKE SOME DOING.

NO, NO, THE GIRL--IT'S NO' AS SIMPLE AS--

THERE'S THINGS HAPPENED WI' HER I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT, I WASN'T READY FOR ANY OF IT...

PUT UP OR SHUT UP.

NO?

WHERE IS SHE, ANYWAY?

SHE'S...

I'M TRYNNA KEEP HER OUT O' THIS FOR NOW.

LOOK AT THIS.

LOOK WHERE WE ARE.

WE SHOULD BE *SO HAPPY...*

HELLO?

374-KSD
ALAMO HERE

MM...?

SORRY.

I WAS, I WAS JUST THINKIN', I'VE GOT TO COME UP THIS WAY TOMORROW WHEN I GO TO SEE THE GUY...

THUD.

EH?

NOTHING.

YOU WON'T BE COMING THIS WAY. YOU SAID YOUR MYSTERY MAN LIVES NEAR BIG SUR--THAT'S SOUTH OF THE CITY, NOT NORTH.

OH AYE...

YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT ME TO COME?

OH...NO.

'COURSE NOT.

AW ANNIE, NO' THIS AGAIN...!

I TOLD YOU, IT'S JUST TOO--

YES, YOU TOLD ME. I CAN'T COME WITH YOU BECAUSE A SUPE--WHICH YOU SOMETIMES CORRECT TO ***ONE OF YOU PEOPLE,*** THANKS--A SUPE COULD MESS EVERYTHING UP.

IN FACT, APPARENTLY I SHOULD GO AHEAD AND ***QUIT*** BEING A SUPE, BECAUSE NOT EVERYONE LOVES THEM AND THINGS MIGHT BE GETTING QUITE DANGEROUS FOR THEM SOON.

CAN'T YOU SEE HOW FRUSTRATING IT IS FOR ME? NOT JUST LITTLE HINTS LIKE THAT, THERE'S ALSO THE FACT THAT YOU SAW ***SECRET SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE FROM THE SEVEN'S H.Q.--***

DON'T.

I'M NOT GOING TO MENTION IT.

I KNOW THE THOUGHT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU WANT TO DISAPPEAR INSIDE YOUR OWN FORESKIN.

BUT CAN'T YOU SEE HOW OBVIOUS IT IS THAT YOU'RE JUST NOT WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE?

HMH.
THAT WAS LOVELY, THAT WAS. THAT THING ABOUT THE FORESKIN.
WELL, THAT'S ME, HUGHIE...
I'M THE PERFECT GIRL.
YOU READ ABOUT ME IN MAXIM OR WHATEVER. I TELL DIRTY JOKES LIKE I'M ONE OF THE GUYS, AND I'M SITTING THERE IN MY PANTIES AND BRA SO YOU CAN SEE I'M A PIECE OF ASS IN THE BARGAIN.
EXCEPT I'M REAL, SO I COME WITH ALL KINDS OF COMPLICATIONS.
WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU INTO, REALLY?
AW GOD, ANNIE...
YOU CAN'T TELL ME.
I KNOW.
YOU CAN'T TALK TO ME, YOU CAN'T RELAX WITH ME, YOU CAN BARELY EVEN BRING YOURSELF TO TOUCH ME.
AREN'T WE DOING WELL?
LOOK...I'M SO SORRY, I JUST...
I DUNNO HOW THIS CAN POSSIBLY TURN OUT WELL FOR US. I MEAN WE'VE BEEN OVER IT AGAIN AN' AGAIN AN' YOU'VE HEARD NOTHIN' THAT'S MADE YOU HAPPY, D'YOU NO' THINK YOU'VE PUT UP WITH ENOUGH?
D'YOU NO' THINK YOU'D BE BETTER... MAYBE...?
I CAN'T.

I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE THE ONLY HUMAN BEING I'VE EVER KNOWN.

I'M SORRY.

I HADN'T THOUGHT OF IT LIKE THAT.

I--

I READ ABOUT A CUBAN RESTAURANT UP ON THE HAIGHT. IT SOUNDED REALLY, REALLY GOOD.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE LEAVING IN THE MORNING, DO YOU THINK WE COULD GO THERE TONIGHT?

I MEAN LOOK AT MY FOSTER-PARENTS. OR THE YOUNG AMERICANS. OR THE ***SEVEN,*** FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

LOOK HOW THEY ALL TREATED ME, COMPARED TO WHAT YOU AND I HAD.

WHY WOULD I EVER WANT TO LET YOU GO?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP ON TELLING ME YOU'RE SORRY.

I KNOW I'M JUST A GIANT COMPLICATION IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW. BUT IF YOU COULD CARRY ON BEING SORT OF SEMI-NICE TO ME FOR A WHILE, I'D APPRECIATE IT.

OCH, AYE, OF COURSE WE CAN.

THAT'D BE BRILLIANT, WOULDN'T IT?

IT'S NICE HERE.

I LIKE THIS WHOLE COASTLINE, I WAS SEEIN' IT WHEN I WAS DRIVIN' DOWN THIS MORNIN'...

EDGE OF THE KNOWN WORLD.

NEXT STOP JAPAN.

ALWAYS LIKED THE IDEA OF MOVING OUT HERE. YOU CAN GO NO FURTHER, LIKE THE PIONEERS WITH THEIR WAGONS AND THEIR HORSES. THIS IS IT.

YOU'VE SEEN EVERYTHING THE COUNTRY HAS TO OFFER; THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE TO FINISH UP AS ANY.

DID YOU NO' FANCY THE CITY, NO?

I'M DONE WITH CITIES.

THEY COMPLICATE AND COMPROMISE. INTRIGUE AGAINST YOU, EVEN. SOMETHING IN THEIR NATURE, THEIR HISTORY, IT MAKES YOU INTO LESS THAN WHAT YOU ARE.

SAN FRANCISCO WAS A CESSPOOL IN ITS TIME. A CENTURY AGO, LITTLE MORE, THERE WAS A STRETCH OF IT WHERE EVERY SON OF A BITCH IN ALL CREATION GATHERED.

THEY CAME IN OFF THE OCEAN, OR ACROSS THE LAND, AND THEY MADE THAT PLACE A WHORE TO RIVAL BABYLON...

BUT OUT HERE YOU LEAVE ALL THAT BEHIND.

YOU LOOK THE PAST IN THE EYE, AND YOU FEEL CLEAN.

OH AYE?

UH, WHAT'D YOU MEAN ABOUT FINISHIN' UP...?

I'M NINETY-ONE YEARS OLD.

NO FUCKIN' WAY, YOU'RE NEVER--

SHIT, IS THIS THE V?

DOES THAT MEAN *ALL OF US'RE*...?

YES.

DON'T GET TOO EXCITED, IT'S NOT ETERNAL LIFE. FEELS MORE LIKE TAXIDERMY, IF THE TRUTH BE TOLD.

YOU'LL GET A FEW MORE YEARS THAN YOU MIGHT HAVE DONE, AND YOU WON'T LOOK YOUR AGE UNTIL THE END. YOU'LL ONLY FEEL IT.

PICKLED, WAS THE WORD VOGELBAUM USED TO USE.

JINGS...

LOOK--

I'M SORT OF ASSUMIN' YOU DIDN'T GO ALL THE WAY TO AUCHTERLADLE, AN' THEN HAVE ME COME ALL THE WAY HERE, JUST TO GIVE ME A LOAD OF ABUSE...

BUT THERE'S MORE IF YOU WANT IT.

AYE, THANKS ANYWAY. WHAT I WAS MORE THINKIN' WAS WHAT THE GAME IS HERE, LIKE WHY YOU'RE SO INTERESTED IN ME IN THE FIRST PLACE...

BECAUSE OF THE NAME THAT HASN'T COME UP YET.

YOU'RE NOT AFRAID TO SAY IT, AM I RIGHT?

BUT YOU ARE AFRAID OF FACING WHAT MIGHT BE.

M.M'S SAID A COUPLE O' THINGS. I JUST DON'T SEE WHY HE COULDN'T...I DUNNO, TELL ME ALL OF IT HIMSELF...

HE LIKES YOU, HE SAYS YOU HAVE HEART. BUT HE'S NOT ABOUT TO MESS UP HIS SHOT AT THE PEOPLE WHO DESTROYED HIS FAMILY.

SO ALL HE DOES IS CALL YOU...

YOU'RE IN THE LAND OF GROWN-UPS NOW.

I WENT TO SCOTLAND BECAUSE I WANTED TO KNOW WHY YOU WERE CHOSEN IN THE FIRST PLACE. I'M STILL NONE THE WISER.

AYE, WELL THANKS A FUCKIN' BUNDLE--

YOU SHOULD BE AWARE THAT I WALKED AWAY FROM THE BOYS FOR SPECIFIC REASONS. GETTING INVOLVED AGAIN IS NOT A THING I DO LIGHTLY.

"BUT...YOU SEE HOW WE'RE ALREADY AVOIDING THE SUBJECT?"

I CAME BACK BECAUSE I'M AFRAID OF WHAT MIGHT BE TOO, HUGHIE.

NOW WHAT THAT IS I DO NOT KNOW. WHEN I FIRST HEARD HIS NAME I WAS LOOKING FOR MUSCLE--BUT HE WAS THAT PLUS BRAINS, AND HE SPENT THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS GETTING MUCH, MUCH SMARTER.

WATCHING ME. LEARNING HOW TO USE THE MACHINERY.

YOU SEE, I CAN'T TELL YOU MUCH ABOUT THE MAN THAT YOU HAVEN'T PROBABLY FIGURED OUT ALREADY. BUT I CAN TELL YOU WHY I STARTED THIS THING ROLLING IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND HOW I WATCHED IT TURN INTO SOMETHING ELSE.

AND ONCE I'VE TOLD YOU...YOU CAN DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS.

"IT WAS THE LAST WINTER OF THE WAR."

"I REMEMBER HOW CRISP IT WAS THAT MORNING. THE SKY WAS OVERCAST, BUT FLAWLESS.

"IT WAS COLD AND IT WAS STILL AND IT WOULDN'T BE LONG BEFORE IT SNOWED AGAIN."

"WE WERE THE SIXTH BATTALION, THIRTY-SECOND ARMORED REGIMENT, THIRD ARMORED DIVISION. WHAT THAT USUALLY MEANT WAS THREE HUNDRED MEN RIDING MAYBE SIXTY TANKS, PLUS SUPPORT PERSONNEL.

"BUT WE'D BEEN SENT TO A QUIET SECTOR OF THE LINE, TO TRY TO MAKE GOOD OUR LOSSES OF THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS. I THINK WE WERE ACTUALLY ACROSS THE GERMAN BORDER, BUT THE FIGHTING WAS ALL TO THE NORTH OR SOUTH.

"AT LAST WE HAD TIME TO RE-EQUIP, TO TRAIN REPLACEMENTS--AND GOD KNOWS, WE NEEDED IT."

HOME

BERLIN

"I WAS A CAPTAIN, THEN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO THE BATTALION. I LIKED IT. LOVED IT, EVEN.

"TO CLARIFY: I WAS AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE ARMY, AND AT THE TIME I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE I WAS TAKING PART IN ANY GREAT CRUSADE. BUT THE MEN OF THE SIX/THIRTY-SECOND I WOULD CHEERFULLY HAVE WALKED THROUGH HELL FOR."

"WHICH WAS WHAT THE JOB QUITE OFTEN INVOLVED. THE BEST GERMAN TANKS COULD TURN OURS INTO MINCEMEAT; HEAD TO HEAD WE COULDN'T EVEN SCRATCH THEIRS. I MUST HAVE BALED OUT OF MORE SHERMANS THE PREVIOUS SUMMER THAN...WELL.

"THE NEW TANKS WE'D BEEN GIVEN WERE SUPPOSED TO EVEN THINGS UP."

CODY.

CAPTAIN...

HE76

HE76

WHAT'S THE VERDICT?

SAME TANK, NEW GUN.

OPTICS SEEM OKAY. WON'T KNOW FOR SURE 'TIL WE MARK OUT A RANGE AND START BORESIGHTING.

GOOD ARMOR PENETRATION?

BOOK SAYS SO. BUT IT HAS A SHITTY HIGH EXPLOSIVE SHELL, ONLY ABOUT HALF THE BANG OF THE OLD ONE.

DOESN'T FIRE WHITE PHOSPHOROUS AT ALL.

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO MARK TARGETS?

OR FRY NESTS OF KRAUTS ALIVE. I DON'T KNOW.

WE USE THAT STUFF FOR EVERYTHING, WHAT THE HELL WERE THEY THINKING...?

CAPTAIN MALLORY, THE COLONEL WANTS TO SEE YOU, SIR.

RIGHT.

IT WAS DESIGNED AS A TANK KILLER, I GUESS YOU CAN'T HAVE IT ALL...

GERMANS SEEM TO.

MM.

WHY DOES NO ONE EVER ASK US ABOUT THIS STUFF?

"I REMEMBER THE COLONEL AS A LION IN COMBAT AND A PUSSY IN ALL OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. I'D SEEN HIM LEAD CHARGES INTO THE MOUTHS OF GERMAN GUNS AND PULL INJURED MEN OUT OF BURNING TANKS--THEN BEND OVER FOR WHATEVER GENERAL HAPPENED ALONG WITH THE LATEST SUICIDAL ATTACK PLAN.

"HE'D FIGHT THE ENEMY. HE JUST WOULDN'T FIGHT FOR US."

'MORNING, GREG. LIKE SOME COFFEE?

THANK YOU, COLONEL.

BE RIGHT BACK WITH IT, SIR.

GREG, WE HAVE A COUPLE OF VISITORS FROM BACK HOME...

THIS IS, AH, SENATOR BUSH--

PRESCOTT SHELDON BUSH OF CONNECTICUT. GLAD TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.

AND THIS IS MISTER HENRY NEWMAN...

NEUMAN. HENRY K. NEUMAN, VOUGHT AMERICAN CONSOLIDATED.

V.A.C....YOU THE PEOPLE USED TO MAKE OUR BOOTS?

THAT IS CORRECT.

UH-HUH.

WELL, WE ARE HERE WITH SOMETHING A LOT MORE INTERESTING THAN BOOTS TODAY, YOUNG FELLOW...!

HERE BY PERSONAL INVITATION OF GENERAL EISENHOWER, I MIGHT ADD.

THAT'S RIGHT, HENRY. THIS IS SOMETHING NEW, AND IT HAS GENERATED INTEREST ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP...

YOU TALKING ABOUT THE TANKS?

NO.

OKAY.

HEH! YOU CERTAINLY TAKE THINGS IN YOUR STRIDE, DON'T YOU, SON?

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SOLDIERS, CAPTAIN MALLORY. VERY SPECIAL SOLDIERS, WHO ARE TO BE ATTACHED TO YOUR UNIT FOR COMBAT TRIALS.

THEY ARE GOING TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE WAY THIS WAR IS FOUGHT; I CAN HONESTLY SAY THAT NOTHING IS EVER GOING TO BE THE SAME AGAIN...

YOU LEARN TO. MY WAR STARTED IN THE NORMANDY BOCAGE LAST JULY; SINCE THEN I DON'T THINK I'VE HEARD A SINGLE PROMISE THAT ACTUALLY CAME TRUE.

NOW LOOK HERE--

NO, THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I KNOW I'M INDULGING IN SOME PRETTY BIG TALK HERE.

I TELL YOU WHAT, CAPTAIN: HOW ABOUT YOU COME WITH US AND WE SHOW YOU WHAT WE MEAN?

I'M GUESSING MISTER NEUMAN'S COMPANY IS BEHIND THESE MIRACLE MEN. I'M JUST WONDERING WHERE A UNITED STATES SENATOR FITS IN THE PICTURE?

WELL, YOU MIGHT SAY I'M MISTER NEUMAN'S CHAMPION ON CAPITOL HILL. NOT EVERYONE LOOKS TO THE FUTURE THE WAY WE DO; IT CAN TAKE SOME PRETTY HEFTY POLITICAL MUSCLE TO GET THINGS PAST THE STICK-IN-THE-MUDS...

WE TAKE THIS WAR PRETTY DARN SERIOUSLY IN WASHINGTON, YOU KNOW. WE AREN'T BLIND TO WHAT YOU BOYS ARE GOING THROUGH-- WHY, MY OWN BOY IS CURRENTLY SERVING IN THE PACIFIC THEATRE.

HERE WE ARE.

HERE?

CAN'T BE TOO MANY OF THEM IF THEY ALL FIT IN THE ONE TENT...

WE DON'T NEED TOO MANY OF THEM, CAPTAIN.

YOU'LL SEE.

...IS THIS A JOKE?

WAIT A MINUTE, THE LEGEND SAID SOMETHIN' ABOUT THIS. HE TOLD ME VOUGHT HAD A GO AT USIN' SUPES IN THE WAR, IS THAT WHAT THIS IS?

THEY COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A WORSE TIME FOR IT IF THEY'D TRIED.

I SAID IT WAS A QUIET SECTOR. AND IT HAD BEEN. FORESTS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE BAD TANK COUNTRY TO BEGIN WITH, AND THE GERMANS WERE GENERALLY RECKONED TO BE EXHAUSTED: NO ONE WAS EXPECTING TROUBLE IN THE ARDENNES THAT WINTER.

BUT ALL THAT MEANS IS THAT WE'D FORGOTTEN WHO WE WERE UP AGAINST. AND THEY WERE JUST ABOUT TO REMIND US.

BECAUSE IT WAS THE SIXTEENTH OF DECEMBER, NINETEEN FORTY-FOUR...

THE START OF OPERATION *AUTUMN MIST*...

"THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE WAS ON ITS WAY."

next: THE BITTER WOODS